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# Shaping the future of Alpine tourism destinations' next generation: an action research approach

## Abstract

Long-term planning is crucial for the competitiveness of tourism destinations. However, the complexity of the tourism "product", the variety of stakeholders and growing market-pressure forces destinations to develop strategic plans which are based on solid contributions by the whole community. Although so-called community-oriented destinations are characterized by a large number of small- and medium-sized family businesses there is a lack of research investigating destination planning and destination scenarios by including the utmost relevant stakeholder group of future successors. A case study presents the application of a world café and scenario method in an Alpine ski resort and gathers data to derive destination scenarios of the future. The paper at hand shows how scenario methods can form a solid base for strategy development in destinations and therefore derive implications for community-based tourism planning processes in destinations. The results indicate that target segmentation and positioning of the destination as well as branding strategies are key to communicating authentically what a destination offers to tourists and residents. The implication is that destination marketers should develop internal and external branding strategies and include the next generation of (tourism) entrepreneurs in today's decision-making to influence future tourism development at the destination.

**Key words:** destination planning; action research; world café; family business; scenario technique

## Introduction

Alpine tourism destinations face tremendous competitive pressure. The situation is critical, as especially in Europe's Alpine tourism the large majority of suppliers in the tourism value chain are characterized by being small-sized businesses that lack economies of scale and scope. These businesses are often family businesses which are strongly embedded in the region (Peters & Kallmuenzer, 2018) and face the challenge of succession (Peters, Raich, Märk & Pichler, 2012). In Austria's tourism sector, about 5000 businesses have to prepare for business succession within the next 10 years (Pikkemaat & Peters, 2016a).

As destinations are constituted as a bundle of interrelated actors, including family businesses who attempt to offer a consistent value chain for their tourists, these micro-challenges influence the level of the destination. Especially in Alpine tourism, due to their dominance, family businesses in tourism influence destinations' performance and future development (Kraus, Märk & Peters, 2011). Until today, tourism research scarcely addressed the role of family businesses in the tourism planning processes. There is a lack of research looking more holistically at destination development of the future generation of family business tourism entrepreneurs. This article will assess the potential successors' perceptions of the future in their tourism destination, the destination's strengths and weaknesses and the associated future challenges and options.

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Therefore, this paper draws on tourism and destination planning but also on tourism development literature in order to create an analytical framework for the case study and action research method used. The case study of St. Anton, a top-tier Winter sports destination in Austria, provides the ideal playground for an action research approach implementing the world-café technique as a method of data assessment. A world café approach, a "conversational process that helps groups to engage in constructive dialogue around critical questions" (Fouché & Light, 2010, p. 28) was initialized in St. Anton in the spring of 2017 with 40 potential successors in tourism and hospitality. The data retrieved will be analyzed using the scenario technique and various scenarios of destination development can be produced. Overall, the authors aim to both assess future Alpine tourism destination development scenarios and to critically discuss and develop a participative strategy development tool.

The analysis highlights the upcoming challenges for future generations and indicates several topics that will be highly important for future tourism development. The results also underline that this kind of technique is helpful in order to create awareness and to proactively face upcoming challenges for tourism destination networks. The paper concludes both with recommendations for tourism development strategies and suggestions to implement the proposed technique in future destination planning and development policies in Alpine tourism destinations.

## Theoretical background

The tourism industry experiences high volatility and dynamics of change. Even well-known Alpine tourism destination brands like "Tyrol", "St. Moritz", "Kitzbühel" and "Arlberg" need to be aware of fundamental changes in the customer as well as on the supply-side: for instance, the shortening of winter seasons is driven by climate change (Steiger & Abegg, 2013; Unbehaun, Pröbstl & Haider, 2008), and family businesses seek successors as the following generation pursues a different lifestyle and questions traditional role models of entrepreneurship in tourism (Neubauer, 2003; Peters et al., 2012).

Therefore, destination management needs to consider strategic development options which should address and include the current but also future key stakeholders of tourism destinations. The awareness and the ability to constructively discuss the future and to transform stakeholders' ideas and desires into concrete projects is therefore of utmost importance for the success of tourism development.

Traditionally, strategic destination development in companies was described by analytical, planned and prescriptive processes (Mintzberg, Ahlstrand & Lampel 1998, p. 47). The "roll out" of a new strategic plan happened in a top-down and rational manner. However, unlike many companies, most tourism destinations display no hierarchical structures, but are instead a network of different stakeholders with partly concordant but also reverse interests (Strobl & Peters, 2013). Mintzberg et al. (1998) highlighted the "Strategy Safari", an alternative way of strategic development. Also, in the tourism destination context, we find a variety of complex planning approaches: Tourism involves multiple stakeholders and aims at developing a sustainable industry in which these stakeholders need to be satisfied. However, tourism planning requires sound cooperation between the private and public sector, but also between governmental and intra-government institutions and political units (Timothy, 1998). Thus, a major stakeholder group of European Alpine destinations are tourism entrepreneurs who frequently manage family businesses as owner-managers.

In Austria, family firms account for the majority of businesses (Haushofer, 2013). Therefore, it can be assumed that family businesses and their succession paths strongly influence tourism development and tourism planning. Therefore, this study attempts to shed more light on the next generation of family business entrepreneurs and aims to assess future threats and opportunities. In doing so, we use

the case of St. Anton, a well-established Austrian ski resort in the Alps which faces a large number of firm succession processes within the next 15 years.

## Tourism planning

Problems resulting from tourism can be subdivided into those which are unavoidable, and those that can be prevented through better planning (Gunn, 1988, p. 21). To optimally use but not overuse existing resources of a destination such as the site, the regional culture and the existing landscape coordinated planning is necessary (Bieger & Beritelli, 2013). Thus, tourism planning can be seen as a way to maximize the benefits for a region and to minimize problems related to tourism development. "If local residents are to benefit from tourism, they must also be given opportunities to participate in, and financially gain from tourism" (Timothy, 1999, p. 373). Timothy (1999) distinguishes between two forms of involvement of locals; their participation in decision-making and receiving benefits from tourism development. Through these forms of involvement in the tourism planning process residents are able to learn about tourism and its effects and they actively can benefit from tourism. In addition, residents can articulate their desires. Finally, this results in the empowerment of various stakeholder groups, as they become active elements in the planning process. A large number of tourism researchers investigated the role of residents (e.g., Andereck & Vogt, 2000; Andriotis & Vaughan, 2003; Perdue, Long & Allen, 1990; Upchurch & Teivane, 2000; Weiermair & Peters, 2012) in tourism planning in general or in the context of festivals or events (Li & Wan, 2016; Lorde, Greenidge & Devonish, 2011). In this context, residents' involvement in tourism affects their attitude towards tourism development (Peters, Chan & Legerer, 2018). Thus, once locals acknowledge the importance of planning and integrate this planning in tourism, the planning process from concept to realization can be designed (Jamal & Getz, 1994). Today, often destination management organizations (DMO) serve as tourism planners or initiate these planning processes (Byrd, 2007) but need support by strong leading entrepreneurs who have a sound reputation in their destination (Strobl & Peters, 2013). Long-term tourism planning is highly important for those entrepreneurs who wish for successors to continue the operation in the future. Regardless, successors are hardly involved in the planning of future of tourism destinations. Importantly, the role of family businesses in planning tourism destinations' future and a generational perspective remains largely unexplored in tourism research.

## Family businesses in the tourism destination – the next generation

Stakeholders within the tourism planning process are manifold. Entrepreneurs, locals, destination managers or investors are only a few examples. "A stakeholder in an organization is any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives" (Freeman, 1984, p. 46). Freeman (1984) perceives stakeholders not only as a group of individuals that is directly connected with an organization, but also all those people affected by an enterprise or a tourism project initiative (e.g., the implementation of a tourism attraction). Besides these groups, it also includes any stakeholders who may influence development intentions. Consequently, special attention has to be paid to those people (groups) who can influence tourism development in positive or negative ways.

Previous research has shown several possibilities to segment stakeholders. Hahn (2005) distinguishes between direct and indirect stakeholders: Direct stakeholders are in a direct exchange relationship with the company and are able to influence achievements (Buffa, Franch & Martini, 2010). Indirect stakeholders are those members of the stakeholder network who influence direct exchange relationships and thus indirectly influence achievement. Thus, to secure the long-term survival of businesses, it is important to make decisions not only on the basis of economic criteria but also to include various external factors into the decision-making (Hahn, 2005). The fragmented structure of tourism destinations

along with the characteristic of being perceived as delivering one product has favored the development of DMOs (Volgger & Pechlaner, 2014). DMOs aim to strategically govern and lead a destination by delivering a consistent tourism product to the customer. Destination governance as a field of research has emerged quite recently (Beritelli, Bieger & Laesser, 2007; Pechlaner, Beritelli, Pichler, Peters & Scott, 2015). In this context, a commonly used theory is social network theory: Destination actors are linked together by formal or informal and cooperative or competitive relationships which can be considered as networks (Pechlaner, Metin et al., 2014; Ruhanen, Breakey & Robinson, 2012; Scott, Cooper & Baggio, 2008). These networks foster trust, reciprocity and the exchange of information.

Recently, new literature emerged that showed the importance of leadership for tourism destinations (Bieger & Beritelli, 2014; Pechlaner, Volgger & Kozak, 2014). Entrepreneurship plays a significant role in destination development by exerting influence as creative and innovative actors (Komppula, 2014; Ryan, Mottiar & Quinn, 2012; Weiermair, Peters & Schuckert, 2007). Entrepreneurs rely on their social networks to gain access to resources. Thus, entrepreneurial networks and their reputation can be interpreted as being an influencing factor in destination development. While a large number of contributions regarding the importance of entrepreneurship in tourism destination development exist (Johns & Mattsson, 2005; Peters & Kallmuenzer, 2018; Russell & Faulkner, 2004; Schuckert, Peters & Fessler, 2008; Weiermair et al., 2007) only very little can be found concerning the role of family businesses in tourism destination development.

Family business research shows that family-related interests affect decision-making structures in family firms (Gómez-Mejía, Haynes, Núñez-Nickel, Jacobson & Moyano-Fuentes, 2007; Habbershon & Pistrui, 2002; Solvoll, Alsos & Bulanova, 2015; Veider & Kallmuenzer, 2016; Zellweger, Nason, Nordqvist & Brush, 2013). Kallmünzer and Peters (2018) explored the role of family businesses in Alpine tourism destinations and underlined that family businesses act oriented to the long-term with a particular focus on maintaining the (socio-cultural and ecological) environment in order to hand over a healthy business to their successors. Despite the importance and the regional embeddedness of family businesses in these tourism destinations we hardly find research analyzing the link between family business tourism and destination development. Nonetheless, research has shown that especially in rural settings the governance configuration affects family firms (Strobl & Peters, 2013).

To sum up, this paper aims at exploring the perception of tourism development by potential entrepreneurs. The study identifies critical elements of tourism development and shows how the next generation of entrepreneurs would manage the future. Furthermore, the discussion shows that tourism development in such community-based destinations (Flagestad & Hope, 2001) is strongly linked to family business development. The authors used a case study approach that builds on St. Anton in Tyrol (Austria). The following chapter presents the qualitative research which was realized by a world-café and scenario feedback workshop.

## Study area and research design

### Study area

For the case study, the well-known destination of St. Anton (Tyrol, Austria) was chosen. St. Anton markets itself as the "The cradle of Alpine Skiing" and is part of the "Best of the Alps" network of top winter destinations. The majority of its income is generated via tourism in the winter season. This location was chosen because the destination is currently reassessing its long-term strategy and aims to include successors in this process.

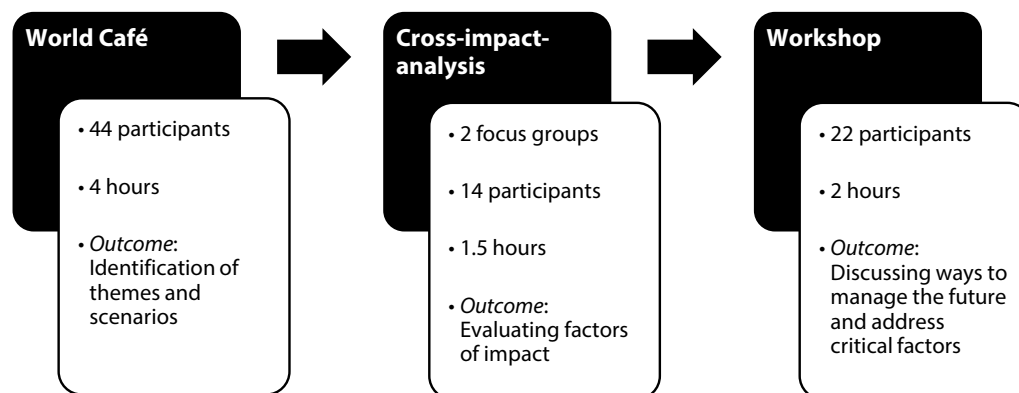
In the past ten years St. Anton has faced stable growth in terms overnights and arrivals: About 2300 inhabitants live in St. Anton and overall 10,000 beds are offered during the winter season. St. Anton is a strong winter destination and the majority of its revenue is generated through winter season sales. St. Anton's winter infrastructure includes about 80 cable cars and offers about 500km of ski slopes. Per inhabitant, about 500 tourist overnights can be counted. During the summer season of 2017 they counted 186,000 overnights and during the winter of 2017 1.04 Mio. overnights. The average duration of stay is about 3.5 to 5 days (Tirol Statistik, 2019).

In order to examine future development scenarios, the authors decided to address the next entrepreneurial generation, most of them presumed successors mainly of small and medium-sized hospitality companies. With the support of the DMO all family businesses were informed and contacted about this project. Only successors who took over their businesses within the last five years and those who plan to take over their parents' businesses in the next five year were selected for this study. This led to the identification of 44 successors who agreed to participate in the project. The participants were between 19 and 26 years of age and the majority (58%) of participants were women. The majority of potential successors work in the hotel industry (more than 80%) and the gastronomy sector (40%). Furthermore, about 30% of all participants are involved in the management of entertainment businesses (e.g., event companies) and ski renting services.

## Methods and data collection

The empirical analysis is based on the principles of action research: Action research denies the distance between researcher and research field. In this methodology, researchers are interacting with the research object and can influence research processes. Action research is a directly applied research, including problem-solving by diagnosis, planning, actions and reflection. It is postulated that research has to change people or social systems like groups and organizations (Devin & Greenwood, 2011; Lewin, 1946). Thus, action research becomes a tool of change management and images of the status quo are also created in a cooperative process among researchers and clients (French & Bell, 1994). Based on an action research process along with the local "next generation," the authors drew an image of the status quo of tourism development in the destination and based on that they created two future scenarios (analysis step 1, see Figure 1). In the next step, the authors identified critical factors and drivers for the destination's future prosperity (cross-impact analysis, analysis step 2, see Figure 1). These were discussed in a feedback workshop and in the final phase of the action research process. Figure 1 outlines the three phases of the research process.

Figure 1  
The three survey phases



The action research design consists of three main steps:

- The *World Café* starts with a coming together of the participants. The world café can be interpreted as a more concrete version of focus groups, which usually entails a dynamic large group event (Anderson, 2011). No interview guidelines are used, but two or three open questions are formulated. A plenary session finishes the event. Usually, the hosts report the results of each table. In an exhibition all results, in the form of table cloths, are presented (Fouché & Light, 2010). After a methodical introduction, 44 participants formed seven groups who discussed tourism development in their destination at seven round tables along three guiding questions: Where are we traveling? How do we get there? What do we have to do or to change to get there? The participants discussed these questions for two hours and wrote their thoughts and results on the paper provided on their round table. A table host was moderating the sessions. The event was closed by plenary reports, an exhibition of the paper table cloths by seven hosts and a plenary discussion. In total the world café took six hours. The seven table cloths were the basic documents for further analyses using the *scenario technique*. In this analysis, eight topics which emerged in all table sessions were derived. A network of those topics was drawn using a mind map and finally presented two extreme scenarios: a pessimistic and an optimistic scenario (see Table 1).
- A *cross impact-analysis* (Von Reibnitz, 1992) helps to systematically identify the characteristics of the eight main topics. The aim of the impact matrix was originally developed as a "paper-computer" (Vester, 2007) to identify influences between these factors. This method was used in order to evaluate the perceived impacts of and from certain factors. As methodologically recommended, these potentially disrupting factors were integrated to reveal possible incidents which may severely influence the scenario (Von Reibnitz, 1992). The cross impact-analysis was conducted in two focus group discussions of 40 and 55 minutes with 14 next-generation stakeholders (see Table 2).
- *Workshop*: The survey process ends with a *presentation and discussion* of the scenarios and influential factors and drivers. Again, all participants of the world café were invited, and 22 showed up to this final workshop. In a 3-hour session, the developed scenarios were heavily discussed. The discussion was moderated by the two authors and two research assistants. The discussion concluded with the development of future (institutional) steps and the forming of action groups, identifying who should tackle certain critical actions within the destination (see Figure 2).

## Results

This section presents the findings: first of all, the main world café discussion themes related to tourism development in the destination of St. Anton will be highlighted. Secondly, the two scenarios are presented: These two scenarios, the optimistic and the pessimistic, can be distinguished into eight themes. These eight themes emerged from the analysis of the paper table cloth content. Thirdly, based on these scenarios, these key factors will be evaluated and classified as active or critical factors with the help of randomly selected participants using a cross-impact analysis. In a final workshop, these factors were discussed in detail by 22 participants.

### *Themes emerging from the world café discussions*

Based on the results of world café discussions, documented by eight table cloths, eight common themes can be identified:

1. *Authenticity*: a dominant theme that was discussed during the world café was authenticity. The discussants believe in the destination's authenticity as a substantial part of the tourism product

reflecting St. Anton's traditions. Although the destination brand stands for tradition in winter sports and authenticity, high quantitative growth diffuses target groups (TGs) and the rise of secondary residences erodes authenticity and the core brand promises of St. Anton.

2. *Supply*: Luxury accommodation & skiing and après ski do not fit with future customer needs; Moreover, climate change tends to shorten the winter season and therefore the other seasons, especially summer, are seen as a key success factor. The main challenges are the initiation of the innovation processes in the destination of St. Anton.
3. *Target groups*: another major theme discussed were the target group in terms of demographic change, and also changing customers' needs. New target groups should be developed especially for the summer season. The challenge lies in the identification of such sustainable and profitable target groups.
4. *Cooperation and communication* are a major problem and theme for the participants. Many stakeholder groups have very different views about the future development of St. Anton's tourism. The challenge discussed focuses on means to foster cooperation and better communication between these diverse stakeholders.
5. *Branding and Marketing* is another major theme: The current core brand content does not sufficiently cope with market trends and target groups. Thus, the question was raised about how tourism marketers should develop an appropriate well-known brand which can also address St. Anton's new target groups.
6. The lack of qualified *employees* was a major theme: As employees are important to quality and tourist satisfaction, the destination needs to address top employees in the labor markets. However, there is a growing scarcity of qualified or high potential employees in the tourism industry. Therefore, the issue of employer branding was discussed during the world café session.
7. *Mobility*: Another major topic centers around tourists' mobility to and within the destination. The participants see the necessity to improve the transport options to St. Anton, but also within the destination there is a call for more attractive transport systems in order to protect the ecological and social environment. The questions raised were: How can St. Anton provide a convenient transport system for their guests when coming and leaving the destination and how can they optimize the local transport system.
8. *Infrastructure and growth*: the final theme discussed was the overall growth of tourism in Alpine destinations. Quantitative growth is not the primary goal of the participants – they seek to increase the value-added and want to avoid minor profit margins during the summer season. The latter happens as many providers sell their products for lower prices to secure occupancy.

## Status quo and scenario development

Table 1 shows a description of the status quo (2017) and two extreme future scenarios (2027). The pessimistic one describes a dramatic "stuck in the middle" scenario (Porter, 1990). A popular brand and image are going to be destroyed by a price war within the destination: The stakeholders want to increase their occupancy rate during the weaker summer season and offer their rooms for a minimum rate. However, this initiates a vicious circle: Brand and target groups are eroding, and the winter season shows decreasing arrivals, weak capacity utilization and price dumping is the consequence. Furthermore, decreasing the quality of input resources (e.g., such as low investments in qualified staff) leads to low-spending guests and again to low-profit margins. In this scenario, it is less attractive to succeed as an entrepreneur or to hire a staff. Even the status quo shows some alarming facts and tendencies: A

decreasing number of residents, a weak summer season, increasing secondary residences, difficulties in staff recruiting are the major challenges of St. Anton in 2017.

The optimistic scenario shows how St. Anton is able to cope with these challenges: through sound cooperation within the destinations a summer strategy has been developed and investments in the summer products allow employers to offer year-round jobs for qualified employees. As a consequence, the summer product is of the highest quality and provides sufficient profit margins for tourism businesses. Tourism development is attractive for all residents in the destination as they are able to participate and profit from it.

Table 1  
Status quo and future scenarios of St. Anton, Tyrol.

Scenarios → Topics ↓	Status quo (2017)	Pessimistic scenario (2027)	Optimistic scenario (2027)
<b>F1: Authenticity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2.350 Inhabitants (2016) ie. -16%/456Pax from 2006 on;</li> <li>• 2.625 employees (Feb. 2017)</li> <li>• 1.2 Mio Overnights (2016) compared to 1.07Mio (2006);</li> <li>• 509 overnights per inhabitant</li> <li>• 243.000 Guests (arrivals)</li> <li>• More Secondary residences</li> <li>• Property prices: € 6.000,-- - 9.000,-- per square meter</li> <li>• Figures show that authenticity is endangered. Secondary residences rise property values; Many inhabitants are leaving;</li> <li>• Tourism dominates the village's culture. Old traditions are disappearing slowly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1.850 Inhabitants</li> <li>• Less than 1 Mio overnights;</li> <li>• 500 overnights per inhabitant;</li> <li>• Inauthentic "Après ski" causes disquiet and waste;</li> <li>• Local associations are eroded because of dominant tourism and lower number of locals. Therefore, many traditional festivals are lost.</li> <li>• International hotel companies are taking over failed hotels;</li> <li>• Other failed hotels were changed to apartments and sold as secondary residences;</li> <li>• Staff is mainly recruited from abroad; So, there is a language and cultural barrier to guests and locals;</li> <li>• Few regional products;</li> <li>• Core competencies like sport and culture are lost;</li> <li>• Economic troubles lead to an unattractive townscape;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2.800 Inhabitants</li> <li>• More than 1,4 Mio Overnights;</li> <li>• 500 overnights per inhabitant;</li> <li>• Many regional products;</li> <li>• Core competencies like sport and original culture are kept;</li> <li>• Active local associations as a base for traditional events;</li> <li>• High-level culinary art combined with Tyrolean hospitality;</li> <li>• Local staff;</li> <li>• Authentic architecture and equipment;</li> <li>• Small and medium-sized firms held by local families;</li> <li>• Secondary residences are strictly limited;</li> <li>• Well fostered townscape based on a master plan;</li> </ul>
<b>F2: Branding and marketing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong, old brand with main components as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Tradition and exclusiveness</li> <li>✓ Fashionable (traditionally British) guests</li> <li>✓ Winter</li> <li>✓ Sport</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand did not change;</li> <li>• Brand's promises are not further credible;</li> <li>• Image components "exclusiveness" and "fashionability" cannot be fulfilled longer because target groups have changed;</li> <li>• Component "winter" is still credible, but challenged by climate changes etc.;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand is authentic; and it changed into summer and winter based on traditional values;</li> <li>• Brand still focuses on sport, exclusiveness and fashionability;</li> <li>• British flair is transmitted to other TGs (e.g., German guests)</li> </ul>



Table 1 Continued

Scenarios → Topics ↓	Status quo (2017)	Pessimistic scenario (2027)	Optimistic scenario (2027)
<b>F3: Supply</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15.5% Summer season overnights (2016) compared to 13.4% (2006);</li> <li>• Ropeways with limited opening hours and expandable touristic services/attractions during the summer season;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less than 15% Summer season overnights;</li> <li>• Insufficient investments in summer season;</li> <li>• Traditional events have disappeared;</li> <li>• Modern events suffer from declining revenues;</li> <li>• Shorter winter season because of climate change;</li> <li>• Declining overnight figures and cold beds and declining cash flow;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 35% Summer season overnights;</li> <li>• Touristic supplies fit to TGs;</li> <li>• Comfortable trekking and mountain bike trails (up and down) are developed and built within the huge existing ski resort; Ropeway Co supports it;</li> <li>• New facilities for sports and relaxing/wellness;</li> <li>• Attractive bathing resorts (e.g., Pools, lake);</li> <li>• Scheduled mountain buses or taxis;</li> <li>• Traditional and contemporary events as a chance to meet locals and guests; Option to create a golf resort?</li> </ul>
<b>F4: Target groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 Target groups: well-established families and single/cliq party guests;</li> <li>• Partly conflicting interests;</li> <li>• Unclear future development;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well-established family guests disappeared; Party guests dominate;</li> <li>• International investors are using the still well-known brand, serving medium budget guests;</li> <li>• No focused opening of new TGs because of missing co-operation among different stakeholders;</li> <li>• Increasing competitive disadvantages concerning families (strong competition among destinations);</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The destination is still attractive for well-established families;</li> <li>• New sporty, active TGs (e.g., Singles and couples);</li> <li>• New source markets in Central and Western Europe (e.g., Switzerland);</li> <li>• A relaxed and authentic social climate leads to regular customers;</li> </ul>
<b>F5: Employees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mainly seasonal jobs;</li> <li>• Many employees from abroad;</li> <li>• Limited attractiveness for locals (few year-round jobs, work schedule is incompatible for young families, etc.);</li> <li>• The trend of regulations: Laws, quality standards, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TGs and seasonal concentration strengthen actual effects;</li> <li>• Foreign, seasonal staff increases (primarily monetary motivated);</li> <li>• The trend of regulations continues; Laws, standards and rules stress labor conditions, structures and costs.</li> <li>• Economic stress diminishes wages and personal quality;</li> <li>• Stressed working climate may be transmitted to the guests;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A strong summer season offers whole year-jobs, attractive for local employees;</li> <li>• Longterm jobs instead of seasonal jobs;</li> <li>• Intrinsically motivated local people are interested in a nice social climate in the village and save Tyrolean hospitality as well as authenticity;</li> <li>• Various personnel developments;</li> <li>• Deregulation, increasing flexibility in working hours;</li> <li>• Prosperity enables fair wages;</li> </ul>
<b>F6: Mobility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Much car traffic;</li> <li>• Scarcity of parking lots during main season (winter);</li> <li>• Good railway connection as a competitive advantage;</li> <li>• Good chances concerning combined traffic;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Car traffic and precarious parking situation is continued;</li> <li>• Railway company diminishes stops of intercity-trains;</li> <li>• No public transport plan: low demand causes declining supply;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Normally scheduled public airport shuttle bus;</li> <li>• Railway station as competitive advantage;</li> <li>• Combined logistical solutions for people and luggage;</li> <li>• Local public transport: Increasing demand causes increasing supply;</li> <li>• Mountain taxi-service;</li> <li>• E-Mobility: Charging services, E-Busses;</li> </ul>

Table 1 Continued

Scenarios → Topics ↓	Status quo (2017)	Pessimistic scenario (2027)	Optimistic scenario (2027)
<b>F7: Infrastructure and growth</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Declining inhabitants;</li> <li>Weak summer season;</li> <li>Secondary residences are seducing because of the chance for "quick money", but take the risk of cold beds and empty streets; Moreover, those stunt the control of TGs.</li> <li>Corporate succession-problem arises;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Melting winter season because of climate change;</li> <li>Deficient innovation concerning TGs and services/attractions;</li> <li>Secondary residences are increasing. Many lower-class hotels were sold as apartments.</li> <li>Corporate succession-problem is strengthened, so hotels are sold to investors;</li> <li>Negative price spiral runs further; Quantitative growth in the party-segment;</li> <li>Ecological stress: landscape, townscape;</li> <li>Uncoordinated planning: Increasing secondary residences, missing master-plan, uncontrolled constructions and expiration of failed and not dropped hotels;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited quantitative growth in number of beds, but by more intensive use of capacities especially during summer season;</li> <li>Secondary residences are strictly limited in ratio to the local population;</li> <li>Ecological sustainability: landscape, townscape;</li> <li>Attractive place for living and running businesses;</li> <li>Corporate succession-problem declines;</li> </ul>
<b>F8: Cooperation and communi- cation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deficient cooperation among different stakeholders (e.g. Ropeway Co, Hotels);</li> <li>Selfishness and zero sum-thinking;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing fragmentation of civil society in the village;</li> <li>Envy and suspiciousness as shared values;</li> <li>Increasing competitiveness among local players and surrounding villages;</li> <li>Deficient intergenerational communication;</li> <li>Increasing social stress in the village because of economical fall;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthened civil society cooperating with politics;</li> <li>Trust and solution orientation as shared values;</li> <li>Non-zero sum-thinking;</li> <li>Emerging abilities to drive self-controlled processes by various discussion platforms as well as by participative decision-making processes;</li> <li>Effective intergenerational communication and cooperation with surrounding villages;</li> </ul>

\*Tirol Statistik (2019).

## Cross-impact analysis

In this second step of the analysis, the eight main topics are regarded as elements. The influence of each topic to the others is evaluated on a scale from 0 (= no influence) to 4 (= very strong influence). The mathematical product of active sum times passive sum identifies critical elements. The mathematical quotient of the active sum divided by passive sum shows active and passive elements. The impact matrix is a heuristic instrument. It is based on a subjective evaluation by a stakeholder or an expert. By doing re-evaluations, different alternatives of impacts may be studied. Two groups of randomly selected participants from the World Café in Phase 1 discussed and evaluated the cross-impact analysis (Von Reibnitz, 1992).

Table 2  
Matrix of the cross-impact analysis

	F1 Authenticity	F2 Brand and marketing	F3 Supply (Summer)	F4 Target groups	F5 Employees	F6 Mobility	F7 Infrastructure and growth	F8 Communication and cooperation	Active sum (AS)	Quotient	
F1 Authenticity	0	4	2	4	3	1	2	4	<b>20</b>	<b>0,91</b>	
F2 Brand and marketing	3	0	2	4	3	2	3	2	<b>19</b>	<b>0,79</b>	Passive
F3 Supply (Summer)	3	3	0	4	3	2	4	3	<b>22</b>	<b>1,29</b>	Active
F4 Target groups	3	3	3	0	3	1	3	2	<b>18</b>	<b>0,69</b>	Passive
F5 Employees	3	4	2	4	0	2	1	2	<b>18</b>	<b>0,86</b>	
F6 Mobility	2	2	0	3	3	0	1	1	<b>12</b>	<b>1,00</b>	
F7 Infrastructure and growth	4	4	4	4	3	2	0	3	<b>24</b>	<b>1,33</b>	Active
F8 Communication and cooperation	4	4	4	3	3	2	4	0	<b>24</b>	<b>1,41</b>	Active
Passive sum (PS)	<b>22</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>17</b>			
Product	<b>440</b>	<b>456</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>468</b>	<b>378</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>432</b>	<b>408</b>			
	Critical	Critical		Critical							

This analysis shows three active and three critical topics. Active elements may influence the system strongly and can be used by stakeholders to address future challenges. The active topics are:

1. *A culture of communication (F8)*: This is a meta-topic, strongly influencing many other topics such as authenticity and brand. This topic represents the processual view: It is the social climate of cooperation within the village as well as in handling its stakeholders. A climate of cooperation is characterized by clear shared values such as honesty and trustworthiness, long term- and non-zero sum-thinking, open-mindedness and being solution-orientated.
2. *Controlling of infrastructure and growth by the municipalities, communes and civil society (F7)*: How to stop the declining of the village and attract future perspectives and affordable living conditions to young local people? Secondary residences evoke cold beds and uncontrollable target groups. Balanced seasons may attract corporate successions. The framework could be a regional master plan oriented to qualitative growth.
3. *Broadening of touristic supplies, especially in summer season (F3)*: The cable car company is the key stakeholder for this topic. Attractive supplies may intend demand. It depends on long-term investment planning (e.g., hiking and mountain bike trails) and a target group-oriented marketing.

## Workshop

Critical elements identified in the impact matrix are "authenticity," "brand and marketing," and "target groups." These elements were further discussed in the workshop. A major task was to think about possible ways to address these challenges. In the two-hour discussion the participants expressed their views and potential ways to shape the future of tourism development in the region:

- *Authenticity*: An authentic local culture is both the foundation and the result of the management of critical factors. It is closely linked to the management of existing and new target segments as well as to the destinations marketing and branding strategy. More concretely the participants want to focus on luxury, being well-situated and sportive, guests who are interested in experiencing Tyrolean culture, local traditions and art. However, authenticity mainly depends on local people and employees. As the local workforce in tourism is scarce, the participants call for more attractive whole year-jobs in the destination. As a consequence, the destination needs to extend the winter season. Thus, summer tourism development and a stronger focus on product development for the low season periods are of the utmost importance.
- *Brand and Marketing*: In the eyes of the participants, credible brand promises can only be generated based on the region's cultural identity. Based on the existing brand components such as luxury holidays, mountain experiences or sports, the summer-image needs to be strengthened. By lengthening the seasons, more local people can be employed, who are able to act as ambassadors of local culture. Although summer-overnights are less profitable, a strong summer season also supports authentic brand elements. Another trend in branding is based on green technologies of mobility. As one of the few large tourist destinations St. Anton offers a fast train station. Thus, green mobility could be developed to be an unique selling proposition: transportation to and within the destination needs to be sustainable in the future and can optimize transfers between the train station and hotels, the ropeway, the village center etc. Therefore, St. Anton should become a pioneering green mobility summer destination.
- *Target groups*: On the one hand, the brand components mentioned above do not fit with mass tourism because exclusive and luxurious offers imply growth limits. On the other hand, there is an option to cross-sell from winter to summer. New target groups, e.g., singles, may fit very well with the core branding. Existing structures and a future oriented green mobility-concept may also attract new target groups. The DMO should sort out the segments that do not fit to the brand or that are eroding the existing brand, disturbing target groups and local culture. Thus, the participants call for a clear definition of non-target groups. In the workshop, the participants highlighted the importance of restricting the increase of secondary residences.

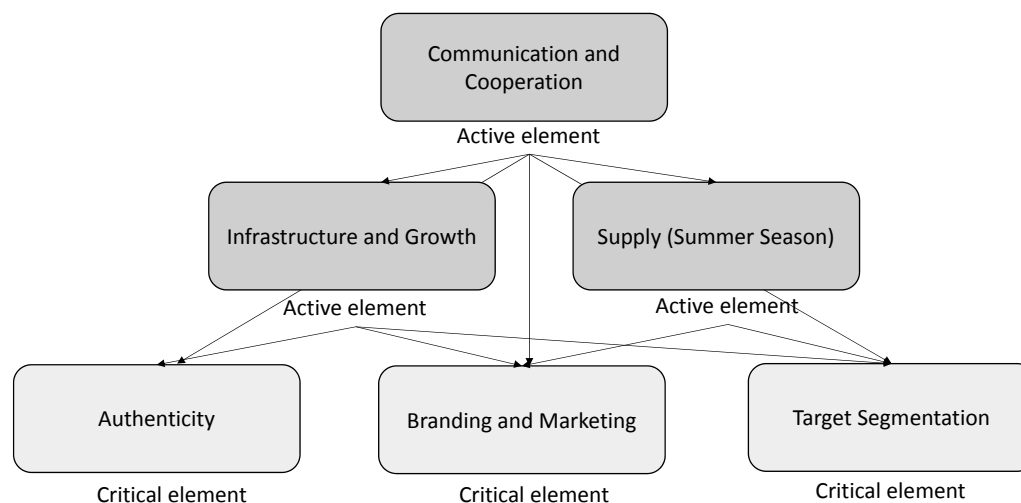
In the final part of the workshop, the participants identified one major meta topic which needs to be addressed in order to react: communication and cooperation as a means to establish the right culture to both improve authenticity but also branding and target segmentation strategies.

## Discussion

As identified earlier, the cross-impact matrix highlights the role of "communication and cooperation" (see Table 1). This seems to be a meta topic in destination development. Branding, target grouping and a commitment to local culture cannot be forced or solely implemented by the DMO (Blain, 2005). A sound commitment to a destination strategy needs a culture of cooperative communication, especially within the destination itself (Beritelli, 2011). However, the DMO is able to organize

prerequisites and opportunities for communication (Pikkemaat & Peters, 2016b) for local players. This meta topic is crucial in managing the three critical factors: authenticity, branding and target segmentation. Also, the two other active elements identified in our study were strongly discussed in recent tourism research. Infrastructure and growth are strongly influenced by the municipality and other public bodies in tourism development. However, recent research shows that DMOs and public institutions need the commitment of residents in order to support new tourism-related projects and to avoid the antagonism of locals (Andereck & Vogt, 2000; Peters et al., 2018). The call for a stronger focus on the summer season product bundles in mountain tourism was supported by the evidence generated in climate change research (Steiger, 2010, 2011). A major key stakeholder is the cable car or ropeway company: their support in making the mountains accessible for tourists in summer but also in the pre- and after-winter season is crucial for any product development initiative in the mountain destination (Strobl & Peters, 2013). Critical and active factors of destination development as identified by the next generation are summarized in Figure 2.

Figure 2  
Active and critical elements of tourism development in St. Anton (Austria)



The active factors can serve as instruments in targeting the critical elements identified by and discussed with the participants of our study (see Figure 2). These critical factors are similar to those mentioned in a recent industry report of the Austrian Hotel Association (ÖHV) published by Gratzner and Schenk (2018): Authenticity is one of the critical factors and refers to the regional specifiers of the destination. Authenticity was introduced to tourism research in order to "understand tourists' travel experiences at historic sites" (Zatori, Smith & Puczko, 2018, p. 113). In our study, the interviewees want to express that local culture and regional particularities are important for tourists and therefore need to be stressed (Meng & Choi, 2016). Furthermore, authenticity also plays an important role for residents as one the one hand it is a source of entrepreneurial diversification (Di Domenico & Miller, 2012) and on the other hand residents develop a certain degree of place attachment which in turn influences their support for the community and enterprise performances (Hallak, Brown & Lindsay, 2013).

Branding and marketing are perceived as the most critical measures in developing an authentic and therefore successful Alpine destination (Zehrer, Pechlaner & Raich, 2007). However, the interviewees argue both from a buyer and seller perspective and underline the functions of a brand as discussed by

Berthon et al. (1999): in the destination at hand, product identification is key for the next generation that builds a relationship with the brand or destination. However, the next generation often complains about the current branding practices which are not in line with their long-term interpretation of St. Anton's development. As earlier studies have shown, power within the stakeholder network in the destination branding process plays a crucial role for the development of regions, e.g., in destination development (Marzano & Scott, 2009) as well as in urban planning processes (Healey, 2003).

According to the Gratzner and Schenk (2018) attracting new target groups, which fit the core brand is key for successful destination development. This holds true for the destination of St. Anton. In the eyes of the next generation, not only branding but also an optimized target segmentation supports sustainable destination development. St. Anton needs to thoroughly target those tourist segments which appreciate existing resource constellations. The next generation actively refers to a resource-based development local development as described by Denicolai et al. (2010): Sustainable tourism development calls to re-focus on the region's resources (e.g. local cuisine, tradition, arts, geography) as the basis for the above discussed branding initiatives (Horng & Tsai, 2012; Peters, Siller & Matzler, 2011).

## Conclusion and implications

The paper at hand presented an action research process assessing the destination's next generation's perception of tourism development. The potential successors developed a positive and negative scenario of tourism development and extracted active and critical factors of tourism development. The world café process was quite useful in gathering the perception of a large number of next-generation entrepreneurs. It initiated a lively discussion among this generation and in an iterative process the interviewees critically reflected past, present and future tourism development initiatives in St. Anton (Austria).

Although the results are promising and underline earlier research in the field of tourism development, the methods used have some limitations: As characteristic for action research, the two researchers actively participated in the world café and workshop and thus might have influenced the world café setting. Furthermore, while 40 participants participated in the world café, only 22 of them participated in the workshop. Several implications for tourism planning and destination management and marketing can be drawn:

- Entrepreneurs' actions in tourism destinations are crucial for long-term competitiveness (Komppula, 2014). Today's tourism development lies in the hands of the current generation and the successors were complaining about their underrepresentation on the DMO board and in major committees within the destination. As a consequence, destination governance patterns should be reconsidered and future tourism planning needs to include the future entrepreneurs and thus the next generation.
- Primary instruments and elements to influence long-term tourism development are branding and marketing and a proper target segmentation. Therefore, destination management and marketing should focus on the identification and analysis of target segments which have a strong affinity with the destination's resources and offers (Zenker, Braun & Petersen, 2017).
- Authentic product and service offers should be developed in order to attract tourists and to strengthen internal marketing efforts. Destination marketing profits from entrepreneurs and residents showing a higher commitment to the tourism products and services offered (Di Domenico & Miller, 2012).
- As earlier research showed, tourism development processes which invite residents and entrepreneurs (Lalicic, 2018; Weiermair et al., 2007) to actively participate are more successful in the long run.

The research contributes to previous literature in proposing more action research-oriented methods in order to gain more profound insights into collaborative tourism planning processes (Devin & Greenwood, 2011). The majority of earlier research used qualitative in-depth interviews (e.g., Strobl & Peters, 2013) and thus hardly provide a group-based perception of tourism planning and development. Therefore, future research should attempt to gather long-term or panel data about such tourism planning processes to extract and understand obstacles and intergenerational problems and misperceptions. The research at hand combines the two major areas of tourism research: destination governance and stakeholder management are closely link to family business research. This especially holds true for community-based destinations where we find a large number of small and medium-sized independently organized family businesses. Family-business research can contribute significantly to understanding patterns of tourism planning and development processes in destinations by understanding family businesses and their embeddedness in the regional (tourism) stakeholder network (Peters & Kallmuenzer, 2018).

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